

1486 S15

THIRD EDITION

OF THE

CHELSEA PENSIONER:

A

COMIC OPERA.

[Price ONE SHILLING.]



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THE
CHELSEA PENSIONER:

K

A

COMIC OPERA.

IN

TWO ACTS.

As it is Performed at the

THEATRE-ROYAL,
COVENT-GARDEN.

The THIRD EDITION.

L O N D O N:

Printed for G. KEARSLY, near Serjeant's-Inn,
Fleet-street. 1779.

Entered at Stationers Hall.

CHARACTERS.

M E N.

GOVERNOR,	Mr. HULL.
BLENHEIM,	Mr. BANNISTER.
LIVELY, -	Mr. MATTOCKS.
LAPSTONE, -	Mr. WILSON.
FLINT, -	Mr. FEARON.
RIFLEMAN, -	Mr. BAKER.
PLUNDER, -	Mr. ROBSON.
HONE, - -	Mr. THOMSON.
BIRCH, - -	Mr. SIMKINSON.
LATITAT, -	Mr. BOOTH.
THICKET, - -	Mr. BRUNSDON.
MALPLAQUET,	Mr. WEWITZER.
PLATOON, -	Mr. MAHON.
SOLDIER, - -	Mr. L'ESTRANGE.

W O M E N.

ESTER, - -	Mrs. KENNEDY.
NANCY, -	Miss BROWN.



THE
CHELSEA PENSIONER;
A
COMIC OPERA.

ACT I.

A View near Wandsworth.

The Door of an Ale-house, a Table, Bowls, Glasses,
Pipes, Tobacco, &c. At the Table are sitting *Blen-
heim, Lively, Flint, Rifleman, Hone, Thicket, Plunder,
Birch, and Latitat.*

G L E E.

*SWEETLY, sweetly, let's enjoy
The smiling moments made for love;
And while we clasp the dimpled boy,
The glass to you, to you shall move.
And drinking, laughing, jesting neatly,
The time shall pass on sweetly—sweetly.*

B

Lowe's

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*Love's arrows, dipp'd in rosy wine,
To the charm'd heart like light'ning pass;
And Mars feels transport more divine,
When smiling Venus fills his glass.*

Live. That's right my lads — we may boast of our valour, but love is the only goal for which we start upon the course of honour—without love our laurels would be but in a wither'd condition; and I'll bett all the world to a corn of powder, that he goes nearest to the mouth of a cannon, who has some mistress to brag of his exploits to when he returns home.

Flint. Bravo, Lively—you and the old song say the very same thing. Give it us my boy.

Live. With all my heart: in the mean time, take care of this old gentleman here.

A I R.

*Brother soldiers why cast down?
Never, boys, be melancholy:
You say our lives are not our own,
But therefore should we not be jolly?*

*This poor tenement at best
Depends on fickle chance. Mean while
Drink, laugh, and sing; and for the rest,
We'll boldly brave each rude campaign;
Secure, if we return again,
Our pretty landlady shall smile.*

II.

*Fortune his life, and yours commands,
And this moment, should it please her,
To require it at your hands,
You can but die, and so did Cæsar.*

*Our span, though long, were little worth,
Did we not time with joy beguile;
Laugh then, the while you stay on earth,
And boldly brave, &c.*

III.

*Life's a debt we all must pay,
'Tis so much pleasure which we borrow,
Nor heeds, if on a distant day
It is demanded, or to-morrow.*

*The bottle says we're tardy grown;
Do not the time and liquor spoil;
Laugh out the little life you own,
And boldly, &c.*

Flint. Thank ye, Lively; thank you.—Come, old gentleman—say here's to you.

Plun. (to *Riflesman*) Why, lord, I tell you, they knows no more about the respect due to us Gentlemen Soldiers—why damme they thinks us fit for nothing but a cat-o'-nine tails, and to be hired out and shot at for five-pence a day.

Rif. Why that's true, as you say, Plunder; but then who have we to thank for it?—our superiors—Merit is not

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rewarded—Come, my lads, here's confusion to the first inventor of jumping over heads. For my part, I say little; but if I had been rewarded as I ought, for my behaviour in that there scrimmage!—Why now I suppose you have heard of poor old Blenheim.

Live. Heard of him!—he is one of the disgraces of his country. There is no general to whom I would pay more respect; descended from an antient family, he inherited only a brown musket; and after having distinguished himself in most of the Great Duke of Marlborough's wars, with a bravery, the admiration of every one, is, at the age of sixty-five, nobly rewarded by a brevet for Chelsea Hospital, whither, I am told, he is now on his way, and where his wife, a washer-woman, and his daughter a seamstress, are waiting his arrival.

Plun. Poor old Blenheim!—Why do you think if as how I had been a general, and Blenheim had served under me, that I would have broke his poor old heart, by putting a parcel of boys before him, because one was my Lord this thing's footman, and t'other carried my Lady that thing's lap dog—

Thick. Why to be sure there must be something wrong going on; but for my part, if they did not tax dogs, and horses, and servants, and enclose commons, they might do what they pleased, for ought I cared. What do you say, old Pedagogue?

Birch. Why, Squire, I say what I have said a hundred times, that your great people should all be sent to school.

Lat. Why to be sure, if they would sue out a writ of discretion, and join issue with common sense, they would be more likely to get a favourable verdict from their country—en't I right, master Barber?

Hons.

Hone. Why I'll tell you what—I think if as why I may speak the truth, that we are all of us shaved too close:

Plun. You think, old Periwig!—for me, if I was commanding officer about and concerning the affairs of this nation, every rank and file should be made either colonel or general.

Live. Come, come, you are too violent; those at the head of affairs know when and how to manage matters a little better than you can dictate to them.

Plun. Manage matters! why I tell you their promotions are interest, their manœuvres ignorance, and their camps parties of pleasure.

Blen. Ha! ha! ha!

Live. You seem, my old friend, to find something pleasant in our conversation.

Blen. Pleasant!—Pardon me, Sir, not very pleasant, but light and airy as may be expected at your time of life—You seem to govern the nation over your bottle, and to amend the state and legislature at every bumper: you contend that others are neglected; that you are neglected yourselves. This is a partial evil not to be lamented; and if you are soldiers, you ought to be ashamed of such paltry considerations.

Live. In your days, my friend, this might be good doctrine for aught I know; but now the case is altered, and every man thinks only of his own interest.

Blen. So much the worse; and if the case is altered, you are properly requited; neglect ought to be your portion.

Live. How's this—do you insult us in return for our hospitality?

Blen.

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Blen. Far from it; I deal with you as a friend, and pay you with honest truth for the shelter you afford me.

Live. There is something like wisdom in your remarks, old gentleman, but mix'd, I think, with rather too much spleen. This public spirit, which you require, is certainly a virtue, but by no means a duty.

Blen. In your station 'tis a duty—the very foundation of every military virtue.—Whoever dedicates himself to the service of his country, should consider his country unable to requite his services; for in fact, that which he devotes to the public good, is above all price.—No more of these complaints then—'Tis unavoidable in countries like ours, that bravery must sometimes fall into neglect, otherwise there would be no subordination; for how could you reward as you ought an English army, unless every one could command in chief?

Live. And pray who are you that talk to us in that stile?

Blen. Blenheim.

All. Blenheim!—

Blen. Blenheim—that poor old Chelsea Pensioner, for whom but now you seemed to have so much compassion.

Live. And can you who have been treated so ungratefully, inculcate the principles of public virtue, and disinterested love of our country?

Blen. From whom then do you expect to hear your duty—from these gentlemen, who never saw fire but in the corner of a chimney? 'Tis true I have been wrong'd, neglected, taken up, imprisoned, accused of violating the
King's

King's rights, in the very moment I protected them, and that by the very man whose life I saved in battle, he who is possessed of a considerable place in the revenues, while I am groveling in this abject condition; but what signifies all this? the actions of my life may be effaced from the memory of a Court, but the memory of mankind will be more retentive, and if it should not, I have the conscious remembrance, and that is sufficient.

Thick. A queer old codger this!—Come my honest fellows; I believe the skittle pins wait for us; good bye old rugged and tough, we'll come and smoke a pipe with you at Chelsea.

Plund. Come, Lively, let us go and see what recruits we can pick up at Wandsworth Fair.

Live. March on, Corporal.

G L E E.

*With mingled sound of drum and fife,
We follow the recruiting life;
And as we march through every fair,
Make girls admire and bumkins stare.*

*With bumpers full we ply Sir Clown,
Or else produce the well-tim'd crown;
And lifting first the sturdy elves,
We gain their sweethearts for ourselves.*

Blen-

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Blenheim and Lively.

Live. Now they are gone, how can I serve you—do you want money?

Blen. No young man, I thank thee, I have wherewithal to conduct me to my last retreat.

Live. What a retreat for such merit!—It makes me look with horror on my country, and blush for every drop of blood I've spilt in her cause.

Blen. For shame! distinguish better; my wrongs—

Live. Are a scandal to the nation; and by Heaven I'd strangle the villain——

Blen. My poor lad! thy compassion is folly! when thou shalt have strangled all the world, will it give me the use of this arm, or make me a day younger?

Live. No—but it would teach such miscreants how to use others.

Blen. And by what title do you pretend to execute my revenge?—Have I transferred to you a right I do not myself possess?—No, my good young man!—If I would have revenged myself, half a regiment would have deserted under my command; but I am resigned to my fate; imitate my example, and allow me to be a judge of what is right and honourable.

Live. At least point me out your enemies that I may hate them.

Blen. Nay, let your children hate them, let them imbibe from their very infancy a detestation for them.

Live. They shall—who are they?

Blen. The enemies of my country.

A I R.

A I R.

*If deep thy poignard thou would'st drench,
In blood to venge old Blenheim's woes,
My enemies, boy, are the French,
And all who are my country's foes.*

*Shall I receive an added day
Of life, when crimes your name shall brand?
No, never let detraction say,
That virtue arm'd a murderer's hand.*

*Of anger then, no single breath,
Respire for my poor sake—but since
You've spirit to encounter death,
Die for your country, and your prince.*

Lively, and Plunder.

Plun. Come, serjeant, the men are all expecting you; there are a fine parcel of raw country fellows, and one animating speech at the drum head makes them our own, my boy.

Live. Plunder, can we spare one of the men to conduct old Blenheim to Chelsea?

Plun. Fire old Blenheim, we have no time to consider about invalids.

€

Live.

10 THE CHELSEA PENSIONER:

Live. Come, Plunder, thou art an honest fellow; thy fortune has a similitude to mine; the only difference is, thou ran'st away, and took up a musket after ruining a poor old mother, whilst I entered in the guards, after being turn'd out of doors by a rich old father because I would not marry a liquorish widow of sixty.

Plun. Well, lad, what of this?

Live. I'll tell thee what of this, as thou art my Pylades I must needs entrust thee with my secrets;—I love this old fellow; nay, more, I love his daughter.

Plun. Oh, oh, you do?

Live. Ay, you rogue, and I have some reason to believe I am not altogether disagreeable to her.

Plun. And do you expect governor Lively will ever consent that his son should marry the daughter of an old Chelsea Pensioner?

Live. If he does not, I'll discard him, as he has me and chuse the old Chelsea Pensioner as the best father of the two;—but, however, I am not without hopes;—thou know'st what a perfect veneration my father has for every military relict, and I think, if I was to throw myself at his feet, plead Blenheim's cause, and my own at the same time, I could get the old invalid a good employ myself re-instated into his favour, and thee a commission.—Come along,—I'll first to my duty,—that discharged, I'll fly to comfort my Nancy, and then to throw myself at the feet of my father.

Jew's

Jew's Row, *Chelsea*, with a poor looking House in the Front; *Lapstone* is working in a Stall underneath the Window; *Ester* is ironing within-side, the Window open; and *Nancy* sits on a Bench at the Door making a Shirt.

T R I O.

*Neighbour, neighbour,
Work away;
What like labour,
Makes us gay?
The world is sad,
It knows not why;
Your poets in rhimes,
May rail at the times;
But since they're so bad,
And no cure's to be had,
'Tis better to laugh than to cry.*

*But look behind,
And you shall find,
For one poor pleasure, plagues a score;
Nor is, I fear,
One whit more clear
The prospect should you look before;
Then far beyond blind fortune's power,
Live and enjoy the present hour.*

Lapf. Why, Mistress *Ester*, your good man makes it rather late; it begins to draw towards the heel of the evening.

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Ef. I wonder, indeed, he does not come, tho' to say the truth, I am glad he staid till I had done my ironing, for if I get the money where I am to carry home these things, we'll have a comfortable bit of something for supper.

Lapf. So we will, Mrs. Ester, I am sure I shall make one with more pleasure than ever I did at a feast upon St. Crispin's day; besides, who knows, if we should wax merry, but the thread of our discourse may turn upon my love for Miss Nancy;—dear me, I should be at home to a peg.

Eft. I'll speak a good word for thee, neighbour Lapstone, never fear—what dost thee say, daughter, to our old friend?

Nan. Indeed, mother, his being our old friend is no very strong recommendation to me.

Eft. No, I warrant you, you can't get your fine serjeant out of your head;—one would imagine your mother's example was enough to frighten you from ever thinking of a red coat.

Nan. I am sure, mother, I have heard you say a hundred times, that with all your troubles, you could live the same life over again for the love of my father.

Eft. So I could, child, so I could, and be happy enough in the main; I can safely 'twear, in all our marches, dustings, and famishings, a-bed early, a-bed late, I never was the woman that said a cross-grain'd word to him.

Nan. What makes you so averse then to my partiality for the serjeant?

Eft. Why, child, 'tis all along of his father that we have been brought to misfortunes.

Lapf.

Lapf. Yes, Miss, I do assure you 'tis very true: when Pensioner Malplaquet came yesterday to have his shoe heel-tapped, for 'tis tore out already though he has had it but five months; however, that's not very marvellous; the Contractors give the poor Pensioners bad beer, or any thing now-a-days; a fault somewhere to be sure there is; I wish it could be enquired out—but, as I was a saying, Pensioner Malplaquet knows the good-looking young Serjeant that comes after you—you knows who I mean, he that makes me prick my fingers with my awl so often for vexation. And he says that he is the only child of Governor Lively: now, Governor Lively is the gentleman that was the cause how and confarning your father's being taken up for a smuggler.

Est. And what a barbarous villain he must be, when all the world knows your father lost the use of his arm by saving the old rogue's life at the battle of Fontenoy!

Nan. Then make yourself easy, mother, for the author of any misfortune to my father shall never impress me with one favourable sentiment.

Est. How prettily she talks it, neighbour:

Lapf. Sharp as a pairing-knife.

Est. Neighbour Lapstone, suppose you was to go towards Battersea bridge and try to meet my old man while I carry this ironing home—As to thee, daughter, if thou refuseth our good neighbour here, only because he is poor, I can tell thee, wench, as there is no station ever so high but has its bitters, so there is no station ever so low but has its sweets.

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A I R.

*The world's a strange world, child, it must be confess'd,
We all of distress have our share;
But since I must struggle to live with the rest,
By my troth 'tis no great matter where.*

*We all must put up with what fortune has sent,
Be therefore one's lot poor or rich,
So there is but a portion of ease and content,
By my troth 'tis no great matter which.*

II.

*A living's a living, and so there's an end,
If one honestly gets just enow,
And something to spare for the wants of a friend,
By my troth 'tis no great matter how.*

*In this world, about nothing, we busied appear;
And I've said it again and again,
Since quit it one must; if one's conscience is clear,
By my troth 'tis no great matter when.* [Exit.

Lapstone and Nancy.

Lapf. So, Miss, it seems I shall never be able to get the length of your foot.

Nan. I am afraid not.

Lapf. What, I suppose you can't buckle too then?

Nan. I cannot, indeed.

Lapf. And pray, Miss, med a body ax why?

I

Nan.

Nan. I have many reasons which you can't possibly guess,

Laps. Why, to be sure, nobody knows where the shoe pinches so well as them that wears it.

Nan. In the first place, you are not my choice.

Laps. Why, Miss, that's true; but a ready-made shoe sometimes fits as well as a bespoke one.

Nan. Then there is such a disproportion in our ages, that I am sure—

Laps. What you thinks if we were to be married together it would be all one as if I was to clap an old sole to a new upper-leather.

Nan. And how do you think we should agree then?

Laps. Why for all the world like John and Jean in the old ballad.

Nan. What, that you sing sometimes in your stall?

Laps. Yes, Miss.

Nan. I wish you'd sing it—'twould divert me.

Laps. Why, Miss, I ought to be going towards Bat terfea bridge; but I am sure I would do any thing to divert you.

A I R.

Sing the loves of John and Jean,

Sing the loves of Jean and John;

John for her would leave a queen,

Jean, for him, the noblest Don.

She's his queen,

He's her Don;

John loves Jean,

And Jean loves John.

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II.

*Whate'er rejoices happy Jean,
Is sure to burst the sides of John;
Does she, for grief, look thin and lean,
He instantly is pale and wan;
Thin and lean,
Pale and wan;
John loves Jean,
And Jean loves John.*

III.

*'Twas the lily hand of Jean
Fill'd the glass of happy John;
And, heavens! how joyful was she seen
When he was for a licence gone!
Joyful seen,
They'll dance anon;
For John weds Jean,
And Jean weds John.*

IV.

*John has ta'en to wife his Jean,
Jean's become the spouse of John;
She no longer is his queen,
He no longer is her Don.
No more queen,
No more Don;
John hates Jean,
And Jean hates John.*

V.

*Li
Nanc
you—
Na
your
any fu
Liv*

V.

*Whatever 'tis that pleases Jean,
 Is certain now to displease John;
 With scolding they're grown thin and lean,
 With spleen and spite they're pale and wan.
 Thin and lean,
 Pale and wan;
 John hates Jean,
 And Jean hates John.*

VI.

*John prays Heav'n to take his Jean,
 Jean at the devil wishes John;
 He'll dancing on her grave be seen,
 She'll laugh when he is dead and gone.
 They'll gay be seen
 Dead and gone,
 For John hates Jean,
 And Jean hates John.*

Nancy, Lively.

Live. Here she is, by heaven, and alone!—my dear Nancy, I flew to you, for a single moment, to inform you——

Nan. Sir, I have received sufficient information, in your absence, to determine me never to hear you upon any subject again.

Live. How!

D

Nan.

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Nan. I know who you are, Sir,—why, you concealed your real name and family from me.—Perhaps you and your father were not to be satisfied, till the ruin of the daughter, was added to the ruin of the father.

Live. By heaven I have not the most distant conception of what you mean; I swear to you my intentions in relation to you proceed from the purest and most disinterested affection.

Nan. Are you not the son of governor Lively?

Live. I am.

Nan. That oppressor of innocence, that tyrant who sought to destroy his very preserver.

Liv. No, let me defend him;—tho' he has discarded me, driven me an alien from his house, I deserved it all, and assumed another name only that I might not be a reproach to him;—nor did I ever know him capable of an injustice;—what would you insinuate then?—what preserver do you mean?

Nan. My father, who saved his life.

Live. Your father!—stay—it must be so—our conversation, every thing confirms it:—but I'll answer with my life whatever injustice poor Blenheim has suffered, my father is unconscious of the cause;—nay, I have often heard him declare he would load the old foldier with favours who saved his life at Fontenoy;—this is delightful, I'll fly to him this instant.

Nan. Thou art a worthy youth—forgive my rashness.

Live. Thy fault was, as thou art, amiable to perfection—I go—when shall I return and demand thee of thy father?

A I R.

A I R.

Nan. *When thou shalt see his bosom swelling,
When soft compassion's tear shall start
As my poor father's woes thou'rt telling,
Come back, and claim my hand and heart.*

*The cause blest eloquence will lend thee ;
Nay, haste, and ease my soul's distress ;
To judge thy worth, I'll here attend thee,
And rate thy love by thy success.*

Lively, Nancy, Blenheim and Lapstone.

Live. Suffer me to speak one word to your father,
and I'll away ;—here he comes, take no notice that you
know who I am, nor let your mother.

Laps. Come along, neighbour.

Blen. Ah, my, daughter !

Nan. My dear father !—how we have wished for
you !

Blen. Where's thy poor mother ?

Nan. I expect her every moment.

Blen. Ah, young man.

Live. I took the liberty of coming to prepare your family
for your reception ; and once more to know if my
friendship can be serviceable to you ;—poor as my situation
is.—I have a relation powerful enough to redress
your wrongs ; suffer him to receive an account of them
to-morrow from your own mouth.

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Blen. Thy friendship I accept with all my heart, young man ;—I have a regard for youth ; in that happy season, the heart is unhackney'd in the ways of men ; besides thou art a good lad, and hast many excellent sentiments, and as thou art pursuing the road to glory, my advice may perhaps assist thee. (*During the above speech, Ester comes, and Nancy instructs her by signs to take no notice of Lively.*)

Est. Ah, my dear old man, and so thou'rt come home at last—and how dost ?

Blen. Not quite so young as formerly, good wife, but as sincere believe me ;—come young man, wilt thou partake a poor supper with us ?

Live. My duty calls me hence ;—I'll see you to-morrow, and I hope, with good news.

FINALE.

Nancy. Good night, good night, thou noble youth,
And if thy tenderness and truth
Should a propitious influence need,
To make thy generous views succeed ;
From grief to set my father free,
Oh ! for a moment think of me.

Oh ! for, &c. &c.

Lively. Good night, good night, the chearful hour
If sad remembrance e'er should sour ;
If, as the joyful glass goes round,
One single drop of care be found ;
Your cup from the intruder free,
And for a moment think of me.

And for, &c. &c.

Ester.

Ester. *Good night, good night, try all you can,
To serve, I pray you, my good man;
His fortune has been very rough,
But, if his griefs are not enough
To melt your heart, and set him free,
Oh! for a moment think of me.*

Oh! for, &c. &c.

Blenheim. *Good night, good night, and if henceforth
Thou see'st proud vice, neglected worth,
Abuse of power, perverted laws,
Bad mens prosperity the cause,
And art from indignation free,
Oh! for a moment think of me.*

Oh! for, &c. &c.

C H O R U S.

*Good night, good night, and when henceforth
I see proud vice, neglected worth,
Abuse of power, perverted laws,
Bad mens prosperity the cause,
And am from indignation free,
I'll sigh, and then I'll think of thee.*

I'll sigh, &c. &c.

End of the FIRST ACT.

A C T II.

A View of Chelsea Hospital—Blenheim sitting on a Bench—a March is heard, and after it a Discharge of Musquetry.

Blen. **T**HE inhabitants of this hospitable asylum are consigning one of their companions to the earth, while the good-natured neighbours flock around, and with an honest grief regard the veterans, whose eyes are swollen at the remembrance of that time when young and lusty they fought glory in the field with the present object of their concern—Generous grief!—It becomes the natives of this beneficent country, for of all the tributes due to worth, there's none so graceful or so noble as the tear that bedews the grave of a soldier;—but the ceremony is at an end and here they come.

Enter Malplaquet, Platoon, Pensioners, and Blenheim.

Mal. Ah poor fellow, 'tis all over with him sure enough!—well, we have not buried him all, for he left behind him at the battle of Hockstet, as good a leg and as fine an arm as ever mounted a breach or poized a firelock.

Plat. Well, he was a noble, fine fellow.

Mal. Ah! I shall never forget before the breath went out of his body—he called me to him—says he, you
see

see Malplaquet, what a campaign I am going to make—
give me some ammunition to take with me, my boy—so
with that I gave him the guzzle, he drank a good swig,
shook me by the hand, cried, damme, good bye! and
went off like a sucking babe.—Ah! 'twill be my turn
next. (*Drinks.*)

Plat. Come, come, don't take it so to heart.

Mal. There was a time to be sure—we had our
day once, that nobody can deny—but now we are as
useless as so many broke up mortars, or spiked cannon—
ah! we are fit for nothing now but to drink and talk of
what we could do formerly.

Plat. Drink—well and what can we do better?—
won't you take a sup with us, brother?

Blen. With all my heart.

G L E E:

Tell me, neighbour, tell me plain,

Which is the best employ?

Is it love, whose very pain

They say is perfect joy?

Is it war, whose thund'ring sound

Is heard at such a distance round?

Is it to have the miser's hoard?

Is it to be with learning stor'd?

Is it gay Pegasus to rein,

Tell me, neighbour, tell me plain?

No, no, will answer every honest soul,

The best employ's to push about the bowl.

[At the end of the Glee the Pensioners go off,
leaving Blenheim.]

Blen-

Blenheim and Lapstone.

Blen. Who have we here?

Lapf. Why, 'tis I.

Blen. You, friend Lapstone? and how came you so metamorphosed?

Lapf. Why you know you was saying last night at supper, that you should like to marry your daughter to a foldier, and so what does I do—I borrows the dead gentleman pensioner's coat to ask you how I looks in it—don't you think I have a good milantary air?

Blen. Admirable!—but I should think your joints as well as mine are not very supple.

Lapf. Oh Lord, you don't know how lissom I be, Mr. Manceuvre, the drill serjeant in the Park, tells me, that with a little treading upon my toes, and cudgelling over the shoulders, he is sure in a week he could make me turn out in the line;—besides, we ought all to go for foldiers now.

Blen. Ay! why now friend Lapstone?

Lapf. Why I am creditably informed that the French are determined this summer to evade us in four places.—They are to make a retreat in Cornwall, embark a large body of troops upon the coast of Ireland, throw succours into Portsmouth harbour, and take a diversion upon the Thames.

Blen. Indeed!

Lapf. Nay more!—They are to set fire to all the shipping in the river, knock down the Tower, and surprize the Lord Mayor as he goes a swan-hopping.

Blen.

A COMIC OPERA. 25

Blen. Why indeed this business is enough to surprize any body.—But still I think you and I can do but little service; we are too old.

Lapf. Old?—Why Lord love you, I am but sixty one—to be sure they scratch'd me off the list for malicious men upon the church door.

Blen. Well friend Lapstone, if I were to counsel you, while others serve their country in the field, you should endeavour to be useful to it in your stall.

A I R.

*Awhile in every nation
War may blaze around,
Still spreading desolation,
Yet there's hopes of peace.
Awhile the billows raging,
May sky and sea confound,
Yet winds and waves asswaging,
Storms at last will cease.*

*But man thus overtaken,
A tempest in his mind,
His warring passions shaken,
Are reeds as in the wind.
Rare is the eloquence that has the charm,
To rule that pestilence or quell the storm.*

E

Lap-

Lapstone alone.

Lapf. I' cod I believe he's right;—if I get wounded with my pairing knife or my awl, I have no occasion for a surgeon to cure me; I can't say so much for a bayonet or a firelock—no, I'm determined—I'll visit no redevouses, but houses of call, nor think about quarters, except to cobble 'em.

A I R.

*'Twere better I took your advice, my good neighbour,
My conduct henceforward I'll mend;
With joy and content to my last will I labour,
Still striving to make a good end.*

*And then as to love, I'll ne'er think of a woman,
I will not, I swear it by goles,
But like methodist preachers on Kennington Common,
I'll live by mending of soles.*

II.

*Many lattles I'll fight—o'er a pot of good porter,
Whole armies I'll kill—in my stall;
To no soul—of a shoe, will I ever give quarter,
And what hides will I pierce—with my awl.*

And then as to love, &c.

Enter

Enter Governor and Lively.

Gov. I hope he won't know me in this disguise; I should fain hear his story without discovering myself; it will be told with more ingenuity, and I shall hear it with less confusion.—For thee, Frederick, thou hast so pleased me, that if this appears as thou hast related it, I'll forgive thee every thing.

Liv. Sir, your eagerness ever to do justice, prompted what I have done; in the relation of which, you'll find I have been faithful.—But here he comes; I have brought this gentleman to share with me the pleasure of your conversation.

Governor, Lively, and Blenheim.

Blen. I longed to see you, Sir—you are allied to a worthy young man—but I am afraid that by visiting me you will involve yourself in a danger you are not aware of—in the ruin of a man proscribed.—If a real criminal is punished, he will soon be forgotten, but if a man of blameless integrity is injured, he will be persecuted with unrelenting hatred, for the very mention of his name is a satire on the times, and his existence is to the conscience of his enemies an unceasing remembrancer of guilt.

Gov. I fear your words have too much truth in them; and yet in the course of human contingencies it must happen, that men of worth will occasionally be plunged in misfortune.

28 THE CHELSEA PENSIONER:

Live. But ought that consideration to check the noble ardour of a soldier? the poorest pensioner in this charity has his moments of exultation when he recollects he has fought bravely.

Blen. True, a love of glory is a noble passion!—but do you think the pleasure that springs from conquest has a sincere and lasting charm in it?—Alas! when a deluge of human blood bids the tears of natural affection flow in rivers round the land, can the mind in that situation taste of joy?

Live. Never.—Yet surely when this blood is spilt in their defence, of whom nature intended us the guardians, though our sensibility may be shocked, our honour can never be stained.—In my mind, defence and reprisals are the only justifiable measures in war, while ambition is but another name for massacre.

Blen. You have distinguished right.—But in your pursuits after fame you will have a worse enemy to guard against than ambition—Envy!—which when you have done your duty, will make even accidents a ground of impeachment against you.—Have you done all that was possible?—You ought to have done better.—The charge is aggravated, and the good you have done dwindles into nothing—your downfall is effected, and some worthless wretch is sure to rise upon your ruins.

Gov. This is indeed a melancholy truth.

Blen. But 'tis a truth that springs from error more than injustice; I teach it to this young man that he may rise superior to it—that he may consult his own heart, and in that manly self-conference enquire—

“Were

A COMIC OPERA. 29

“ Were I reduced to the condition of old Blenheim,
 “ would my innocence make even affliction smile ?” If
 you hesitate a moment to say yes to this question, pass
 your life in obscurity, for you have not the materials for
 a public character.

A I R.

*Let your courage boy be true t’ye,
 Hard and painful is the soldier’s duty ;
 ’Tis not alone to bravely dare,
 To fear a stranger,
 Each threat’ning danger,
 That whistles through the dusky air ;
 Where thund’ring jar,
 Conflicting arms,
 All th’ alarms,
 And dreadful havoc of the war ;*

*Your duty done and home returning,
 With self-commended ardour burning ;
 If this right pride,
 Foes should deride,
 And from your merit turn aside ;
 Though than the war the conflict’s more severe,
 This is the trial you must learn to bear.*

Gov.

30 THE CHELSEA PENSIONER :

Governor, Lively.

Gov. What injustice have I been guilty of to this man ? I would have discovered myself and remedied all, but that I wish to come provided with the means ; I have thought what employ to procure him, and mean to supply myself with the necessary instruments before I acquaint him with his good fortune.

Live. Yonder come his wife and daughter, Sir.

Gov. You tell me the old woman don't know who I am ; I suppose she'll abuse me liberally ; I'll humour it— and as to the daughter, I mean to make a trial of her.

Live. Dear Sir—

Gov. Nay, I must insist, upon your duty, that you'll not interfere ; assisting the father is one thing ; but consenting to my son's marriage with the daughter, is another ; I intend to make a trial of her, I tell you ; and of you too, or I am mistaken.

Governor, Lively, Esther, Nancy.

Est. Nay, come along child ; I am not afraid to speak to him, not I.

Nan. My anxiety makes me break through every decorum ; pray tell me—what of my father ?

Est. Ay, let us know something about my old man ; they tells me, Sir, you are come to right him ; I am sure 'tis high time ; do you know this Governor Sir ?

Gov.

Gov. A little.

Est. Is not he a sad old villain?

Nan. Hush, mother, consider this gentleman's his relation.

Est. What of that? what of that? the truth's the truth.

Gov. Aye, aye, don't mince the matter, speak what you think of him; I assure you nobody would be so likely to blame him, for doing wrong, as I should.

Est. Wrong, Sir, you shall judge yourself whether he has done wrong or no: after all poor Blenheim's sufferings, I am sure I shall never forget when his dear arm was shot, through and through, at Fontenoy; I was waiting, with some other gentlemen's wives, upon a baggage-waggon; and when he was brought to me, says he, wife, this is a smart wound; but I am glad I received it, for it saved my captain's life; and don't you think, after this, that he must be the cruellest, hard-hearted old rogue——

Gov. Oh! certainly, I never met with such an infamous piece of business in my life; but, now, what plan would you have me pursue to make him do justice?

Est. Why, Sir, if you'll be so good, I'd have you go to him, tell him what a villain he is; and that, if he ever expects to sleep quietly in his bed, he'll come here directly, and reward my poor husband for all he has undergone.

Gov. You may depend upon me—he shall be righted; and I don't doubt but there are many years of happiness yet in store for you.

Est. Why, most of my family lived to a good round age; and, for my part, I'm brave and hearty.

Gov.

32 THE CHELSEA PENSIONER:

Gov. So you seem.

A I R.

Est. *Why, thanks be prais'd, I'm pretty free*

From sickness, though I'm old;

Indeed an asthma teazes me

Now I've got a cold;

The gout too plays me tricks;

Then I've the rheumaticks,

And a sort of a wheezing

That's sometimes teazing,

In the morning, do you see;

But 'tis over soon,

For by that time 'tis noon

The deuce a thing ails me.

Governor, Lively, Nancy.

Gov. Poor woman! she's very sincere at least.

Nan. I hope you'll have the goodness to pardon her, Sir; her anxiety for my father outweighs every other consideration.

Gov. Your father has been ill-treated, matters have been falsely represented to me, and he has severely suffered for it; I mean to atone for my error, but I hear it is expected that I shall countenance an extravagant passion which, it seems, my only son has thought proper to entertain for you.

Nan. Sir, my father's lessons and example have fortified me against the severest strokes of fortune; his happiness, therefore,

therefore, accomplished, I shall resign myself to whatever may be my fate without a sigh.

Gov. I am glad to hear it; this good sense seems to promise me that you'll see, very fairly, the propriety of breaking off this matter intirely.

Live. For Heaven's sake, Sir—

Gov. Sir, I shan't hear a word from you; the girl has a hundred times your understanding; she can't, for the life of her, deny but that I talk very reasonably; can you now, young woman?

Nan. Indeed, Sir — I — I a think Sir—

Gov. As I do — I knew it well enough; well then, I suppose you won't be at all shocked when I tell you I have found out a match for my son.

Live. This is what I feared—I know who you mean Sir, the widow Autumn—I hoped I should never hear this hated subject again—I cannot consent to it.

Gov. You can't!

Live. No, Sir—What, marry ugliness, deformity—

Gov. Beauty and symetry?—Her gold is very handsome, and her bank notes are drawn with an admirable correctness.

Live. Old age!

Gov. Money can never be old boy.—A guinea coined a hundred years ago, so it is but weight, is as young and blooming as one just come out of the mint.

Live. Can I look at this charming creature and hear this?

Nan. Think not of me, Sir.

Gov. Come, to cut the matter short consent this instant, or I'll recal my promise to redress old Blenheim.

F

Nan:

34 THE CHELSEA PENSIONER:

Nan. (*To Live.*) Pray, Sir, don't hesitate.

Live. How can you persuade me too——

Nan. Heaven knows with what reluctance—but I should not deserve you if I acted otherwise—every fear vanishes at sight of my father's danger, and if I cannot be happy without making him miserable, my heart may break, but it shall never swerve from its duty.

Gov. Generous, charming girl!—forgive this little trial of your affection, for it was no more, and take this hand which you would honour by your acceptance, were it that of a Prince.

Nan. With him, Sir, I could be happy in any situation.

A I R.

*When well one knows to love and please,
What distresses can one prove,
What can rob that heart of ease;
Possess'd of pleasure, rich in love?*

*Alas! without this sovereign good,
Whose power no emperor can stay;
Riches, rank, or noble blood,
Honours, titles, what are they?*

*One tender look's to lovers worth
More treasure than the Indies own;
Smiles are the empire of the earth,
The arms of those we love a throne.*

Another

A Party of Soldiers. — Lapstone:

Lapf. You say you are old Blenheim's friends.

Sol. Yes, he's our ancient comrade as it were, and understanding he is here, we are come to crack a noggin with him.

Lapf. You'd be sorry to have him used ill, should not you?

Sol. I should like to see the man that dared to do it.

Lapf. You see those two men going out of the gate, one of them is Governor Lively's son, and the other some friend in disguise;—I know there's mischief hatching, for I heard them say they'd have the warrants filled up, and then come and surprize them.

Sol. Hey—fire and fury, follow me.

Blenheim, Malplaquet, and Pensioners.

Blen. 'Tis true, my honest comrade; that in the best institutions there will, creep some abuses, but we should be more reasonable, if instead of magnifying the few we find, we were thankful we find no more;—but who have we here?

Enter

Enter Ester, Nancy, Governor, Lively, Soldiers, and Pensioners.

Est. Oh, husband, a whole heap of your friends have seized the young man, and the strange gentleman that's with him, and are forcing them before you; and neighbour Lapstone says, 'tis well they did, for they were just going for a warrant to take you up, and carry you to prison again.

Nan. He's a meddling fool;—their intentions are the fairest depend upon it.

Gov. So, old gentleman, we are your prisoners it seems.

Blen. My prisoners!—

Lapf. Yes, yes, we have got the gentleman in the straps!

Blen. Let me understand you, Sir.

Gov. Why, these men, who, I think, are a little too busy in your affairs, will needs have it that we mean you some foul play.

Blen. And do they mean to shew their friendship to me by this outrage?

Sol. Why, lookee, Master, Blenheim—you are a hearty one—I have served with you, and I honour you—and if these gemmen here means you no foul play all's well enough; but if they did, I am the man that would go through a little rough work rather than see it.

Lapf. I'cod, and so would I too—Oh damme, I don't value danger a hog's bristle to serve my friend.

Blen. These gentlemen can mean me no ill, for I have done them none—pray, Sir, forgive them.

I

Gov.

Gov. On one condition, I will.

Blen. Name it.

Gov. That you'll forget your wrongs and forgive me—the unfortunate, though innocent author of them.

Blen. How, Sir—are you Governor Lively?

Lapf. Governor Lively! I have got a good job on't—I am afraid 'tis coming to my turn to be in the straps.

Gov. Yes, and to shew you that the world is sometimes mistaken, at the moment your friends believed I was meditating mischief against you, I was hastening to procure the means of exalting you to a situation you deserve, and would adorn.

Blen. I do not deny, Sir, but that my heart feels proudly at this moment, and though I do not wish this for myself, I wish it as an example for the world.

Lapf. Neighbour Blenheim, will you desire his honour, the Governor, not to make an example of me?

Blen. Speak for yourself, friend Lapstone.

Lapf. (*Kneels*) Indeed, and please your Govership, I should not have taken this business in hand if I had not thought you some rogue come to ill use my old shop-mate here.

Gov. I freely forgive thee.—But how shall I thank thee, my son?

Blen. Another mystery—your son!

Gov. Yes, my worthy son! who has pointed me out this most noble period of my life—how shall I reward him?

Liv.

38 THE CHELSEA PENSIONER.

Live. 'Tis not in your power, Sir,—poor as old Blenheim is, he has a treasure in his possession infinitely above all yours.

Blen. My only treasure is my daughter—and if your father consents, I know not where I could bestow her so worthily.

Gov. I have consented already.

Blen. Take her then (*to the Pensioners*) my honest comrades, you smile at my good fortune—'tis for you I consent to it—for it shall be my constant wish and endeavour, in conjunction with this gentleman, to make your situation as happy as it is respectable.

FINALE.

Live. *Love, joy, and harmony,
Shall henceforth here abound ;
While with the glass, the jovial glee
Shall merrily go round.*

CHORUS.

*Drums shall beat, and fifes shall sound,
And love, joy, and harmony,
Shall henceforth here abound ;
While, with the glass, the jovial glee
Shall merrily go round.*

Est,

A COMIC OPERA.

39

Est. *Dame Fortune, my good man and me,
Has done then playing pranks ;
Accept, good, Sir, for this bounty,
My humble mite of thanks,*

Cho. Drums, &c.

Nan. *Wondering, I here transported stand,
How most to admire the worth
Of him to whom I give my hand,
Or him who gave me birth.*

Cho. Drums, &c.

Blen. *Fortune as now is often just,
Yet we'll not take our due,
'Till of success this sudden gust
Is ratify'd by you.*

Cho. Drums, &c.

THE END.

A COMIC OPERA

From Fortune my good night and
I have been thinking of you;
And, good, for this change
My friends will be glad.
Chorus, &c.

My friends, I have transferred
This night to admit the crowd
Of him to whom I give my hand
Or him who gave me his.
Chorus, &c.



Chorus, &c.

THE END